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A rare stone find of the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age from Swanborough Hill, Iford

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Part of a ground-stone implement known as 'shaft-hole adze' (Fig. 1) has been found by Mr Ben Taylor of Iford in a ploughed field on Swanborough Hill. 'Shaft-hole adzes', most of which are fashioned from tough igneous or metamorphic rock (Table 1), are double-ended, at least twice as long as they are wide, and have an hour-glass perforation at or near the centre (Roe 1979, 36). Their blades are at right-angles to the perforation. The present find, which comprises half of an adze broken across the perforation, would reconstruct at about 200 × 90 × 45 mm, longer than most local examples. It weighs 622 grams. Like finds from Firle (Roe 1979, 38, fig. 13, Sx 60) and East Dean (Curwen 1928, 84, fig. 1), but unlike many others, both its ends and its sides taper to a sharp edge. It has been repeatedly scratched by plough action but a weathering-rind present on both the worked surfaces of the stone and the break shows the latter to be of some antiquity. Sixteen other 'shaft-hole adzes' are known from the county, mostly from the Downs (Table 1), but the type is rare nationally.

Surface examination of the of the present find suggests that it is of diorite, an intermediate igneous rock. Large erratics of this stone occur naturally beneath the Selsey raised-beach (Castleden 1996, 13). This deposit, or a beach fed by it, is the most likely source, although import from an *in situ* outcrop further afield cannot be ruled-out. Owing to uncertainties regarding the ultimate source of the Selsey erratics, thin-sectioning, which would be required in order to characterize the stone type petrologically, was not carried out and is not recommended.

The 'shaft-hole adze' is one of several stone implement types associated with the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age in Britain. Typologically, it falls somewhere between the Late Neolithic 'macehead', which has no blade, and the Early Bronze Age 'battle-axe', which has a blade

Table 1. Sussex 'shaft-hole adzes'. (Adapted from Clough & Cummins 1988, 165–7.)

Site name	**NGR**	**Stone type**
Barkhale	SU 978 124	Quartzite
Bracklesham Bay	SZ 818 955	Epidiorite
Durrington	TQ 128 058	Dolerite
East Dean	TV 560 987	Porphyritic felsite
Firle	TQ 464 078	Greywacke
Highdown	TQ 093 044	Sandstone
Hurstpierpoint	TQ 403 020	Quartz dolerite
Iford	**TQ 391 067**	**Diorite**
Lewes	TQ 42 11	Sandstone
Newhaven	TQ 44 00	Spotted dolerite
Parham Down	TQ 06 13	Greywacke
Peacehaven	TQ 403 020	Sandstone
Piddinghoe	TQ 427 036	Sandstone
Ringmer	TQ 430 134	Sandstone
Saddlescombe	TQ 27 11	Lamprophyre
Wiston	TQ 145 160	Quartzite
Wolstonbury	TQ 284 138	Diorite

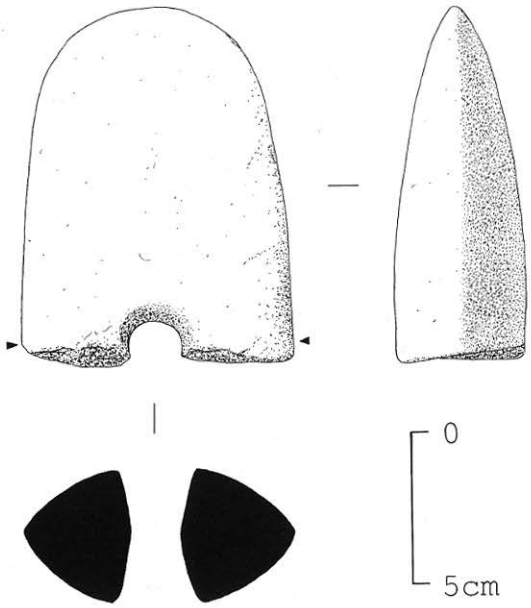

Fig. 1. The Swanborough Hill 'shaft-hole adze'.

parallel to the perforation. No Sussex finds are from datable contexts but part of one was found with Late Neolithic 'Grooved ware' and Beaker sherds in the outer ditch of Windmill Hill causewayed enclosure, Wiltshire (Smith 1965, 11, 114). Little is known of their use. It has been observed that their blades 'never give . . . the impression of being capable of cutting' (Roe 1979, 36) and the present find, like a number of others from Sussex and outside the county (Curwen 1928, 83–5), is not obviously use-worn. This may suggest some kind of enhanced value for them akin to that postulated for stone axes but, given the wide range of stone types used in the manufacture of Sussex examples (Table 1), industrial scale exploitation of this similar to that associated with axes is unlikely.

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An archaeological discovery on Brack Mount, Lewes, East Sussex

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This note reports on the discovery of archaeological features, including a well or cistern, on Brack Mount (TQ 4155 1032), the north-eastern of Lewes castle's two mottes, following an episode of subsidence towards the northern edge of the summit in April 2001 (Fig. 1). The features were partially excavated by the Mount's proprietors, the Sussex Archaeological Society, during limited works undertaken to consolidate the subsided area in advance of infilling. Under the terms of Class 5 Scheduled Monument Consent (Scheduled Ancient Monument no. 12872), the recording of archaeologically sensitive deposits/features was confined to the area cleared by the consolidation work and for this reason conclusions here advanced should be considered as preliminary.

The subsided area comprised a sub-circular hole, roughly 2 m in diameter, into which turf and topsoil had slumped to a depth of 0.8 m. In advance of removing the subsided material, the overhanging turf was cut back to consolidated ground and the edges of the void squared-up to form sections (Fig. 2). Below the slumped layer of topsoil, the irregular sides of the hole could be seen to consist of flint gravel and larger flint nodules, some of which were mortared together, within a loose sandy matrix (Figs 2b & c). An overhanging section of masonry wall or foundation (1.10 × 0.55 × 0.80 m), constructed of flint with occasional irregular yellow sandstone and chalk blocks set in a hard lime-based mortar, projected into the void from this stratigraphic level (Fig. 2c); unfortunately, an overnight collapse precluded its accurate recording *in situ*.

The loose flinty deposit overlay the slanting, upper course of a circular chalk-lined feature, 1.8 m in diameter, a further three courses of which were fully exposed once a dumped deposit of modern rubbish and demolition material had been fully cleared from its interior down to the level of a more compact fill, at which point the excavation was terminated (Fig. 2a). As a result of displacement or deliberate robbing, only a third of the original upper course of the structure survived *in situ*. The lining (below the upper course) was very carefully constructed of large rectangular dressed chalk blocks set in mortar and laid in regular courses to produce a flush vertical, inner surface. Several of the chalk blocks displayed tooling marks (see Fig. 3). Two pairs of diametrically opposed apertures were cut into the third course, at 90 degrees to the lining (Figs 2a & 3). The larger pair (Fig. 3:1 & 2) were sub-rectangular and pierced through the lining to a maximum of 0.34 m, whereas the smaller pair were semicircular and penetrated to a depth of no more than 0.15m (Fig. 3:3 & 4).

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It is reasonably safe to conclude that the chalk-lined feature is one and the same as the 'possible well' investigated by David Thompson, following similar subsidence in 1962, and from which he recovered medieval pottery and slate (Drewett 1992, 72). The modern rubbish incorporated into the upper fill is consistent with this attribution. Thompson's unpublished excavation represented the sum total of archaeological work undertaken on Brack Mount previous to the commencement of the 2001 investigation.

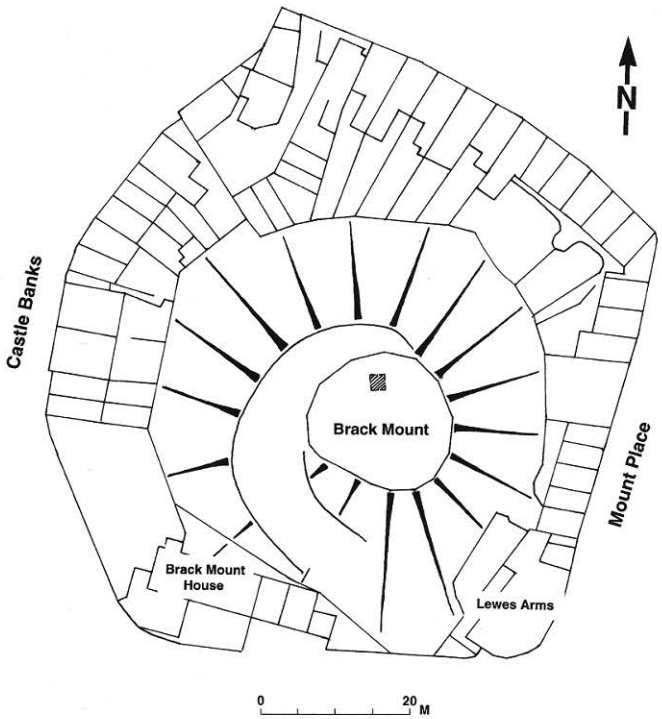

Fig. 1. Location of Brack Mount investigation.